

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01

SAM-01 ACDA-07 EA-07 /075 W
----- 000595

R 061325Z NOV 76

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 752

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

USMISSION BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 17489

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, UR, US

SUBJ: SOVIET LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENTS

REF: MOSCOW 17460, MOSCOW 17449

1. SUMMARY: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE LAST WEEK OR SO INDICATE INTENSIFIED MEDIA FOCUS ON BREZHNEV, PROBABLY AS PART OF A BUILDUP FOR HIS 70TH BIRTHDAY NEXT MONTH. OF PARTICULAR NOTE IS PUBLICATION OF A NEW, "SHORT BIOGRAPHY" OF LEONID I'LICH. RYABOV IS RUMORED TO HAVE TAKEN OVER USTINOV'S CC SECRETARIAT PROTFOLIO FOR DEFENSE INDUSTRY. DEMICHEV RECEIVED SOM EMEDIA ATTENTION IN CONNECTION WITH HIS SUPREME SOVIET SPEECH ON HISTORICAL MONUMENTS. KULAKOV WAS SELECTED TO DELIVER THE "OCTOBER REVOLUTION" SPEECH AT THE KREMLIN THIS YEAR. OVERALL, APART FROM THE HIGH DEGREE OF
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ATTENTION BEING PAID TO BREZHNEV, THINGS APPEAR TO BE QUIET

ON THE LEADERSHIP FRONT. END SUMMARY

2. BREZHNEV HAS RECEIVED GREATER THAN USUAL MEDIA ATTENTION DURING THE PAST TEN DAYS, APPARENTLY AS PART OF A BUILDUP FOR HIS 70TH BIRTHDAY ON DECEMBER 19. FOR EXAMPLE:

-- FOREIGN REACTION TO BREZHNEV'S OCTOBER CC PLENUM SPEECH HAS BEEN FEATURED ON PRESS, RADIO AND TV; AND, AS AT THE 25TH CONGRESS, LAUDATORY REFERENCE TO BREZHNEV'S SPEECH APPEARED IN ALMOST ALL OF THE SPEECHES AT THE OCTOBER 27-29 SUPREME SOVIET SESSION;

-- KUNAYEV, AT HIS AWARD CEREMONY OCTOBER 27 (CARRIED ON TELEVISION THAT EVENING AND FEATURED IN THE PRESS OCTOBER 28), RECALLED THAT IT WOULD SOON BE 23 YEARS SINCE HE BEGAN WORKING IN KAZAKHSTAN WITH "THE OUTSTANDING FIGURE OF OUR PARTY AND THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT L.I. BREZHNEV." PROGRESS IN KAZAKHSTAN AS WELL AS "ALL SUCCESSES AND ATTAINMENTS OF THE ENTIRE SOVIET PEOPLE" HAVE BEEN CONNECTED WITH LEONID I'LICH'S NAME (WHILE KUNAYEV SPOKE THESE WORDS, THE TV CAMERA FOCUSED ON BREZHNEV, WHO LOOKED AS IF HE WERE FIGHTING BACK TEARS);

-- AS SUGGESTED BY EMBASSY PRAGUE, HUSAK SEEMS TO HAVE MADE THE PILGRIMAGE TO MOSCOW PRIMARILY TO PRESENT BREZHNEV WITH A MEDAL, WHICH OF COURSE GENERATED EXTENSIVE SOVIET MEDIA COVERAGE;

-- ALTHOUGH KULAKOV WAS THE FEATURED SPEAKER AT THE NOVEMBER 5 KREMLIN MEETING, BREZHNEV WAS ACCORDED A LARGER FRONT-PAGE HEADLINE IN THE NOVEMBER 6 PRESS REGARDING HIS NOVEMBER 5 MEETING WITH YOUTH LEADERS FROM "SOCIALIST" COUNTRIES (APPARENTLY IN MOSCOW TO DISCUSS PREPARATIONS FOR THE 11TH YOUTH FESTIVAL IN CUBA, AS WELL AS TO ATTEND THE HOLIDAY FESTIVITIES HERE).

3. WHAT SEEMS TO BE A NEW DEPARTURE IN "BREZHNEVIANA" WAS MARKED WITH PUBLICATION ON "MOSCOW NEWS" LAST WEEK AND THIS OF A TWO-PART ILLUSTRATED "SHORT BIOGRAPHY" OF BREZHNEV -- TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, THE FIRST OFFICIAL SOVIET BIOGRAPHY OF HIM, APART FROM ENCYCLOPEDIA ARTICLES. ("MOSCOW NEWS" IS A WEEKLY CONFIDENTIAL

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PUBLICATION OF THE UNION OF SOVIET FRIENDSHIP SOCIETIES AND IS INTENDED PRIMARILY FOR FOREIGN AUDIENCES). BREZHNEV IS THE ONLY SOVIET LEADER, ASIDE FROM LENIN, TO BE MENTIONED BY NAME IN THE BIOGRAPHY. THE PREFACE TO PART ONE OF THE WORK MAKES CLEAR THAT IT WAS WRITTEN IN ANTICIPATION OF BREZHNEV'S 70TH BIRTHDAY.

4. WHILE THE POLITBURO AND CENTRAL COMMITTEE ARE MENTIONED

SEVERAL TIMES, THE FOCUS IS ON BREZHNEV, PORTRAYED AS AN UNUSUALLY GIFTED BUT WARMLY HUMAN LEADER RESPONSIBLE FOR VIRTUALLY ALL MAJOR POLICY INITIATIVES IN RECENT YEARS. OF PARTICULAR INTEREST IS EMPHASIS UPON HIS POSTWAR WORK IN THE FIELDS OF DEFENSE AND SPACE. SOME HIGHLIGHTS:

-- AS A WORKER AND STUDENT IN DNEPRODZERZHINSK IN THE EARLY 1930'S, BREZHNEV IS CHARACTERIZED AS HAVING "AN AMAZING CAPACITY FOR WORK, AN ABILITY TO USE TIME RATIONALLY, CHARACTERISTIC OF L.I. BREZHNEV AS GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE CPSU CENTRAL COMMITTEE;"

-- "ALL WHO HAVE WORKED OR HAVE HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH HIM UNANIMOUSLY AGREE THAT L.I. BREZHNEV HAS AN EXCELLENT QUALITY: CONSIDERATION FOR PEOPLE, SYMPATHY;" "IT IS THE COMBINATION OF HIS PERSONAL QUALITIES AND THE WAY HE WORKS THAT HAVE CONTRIBUTED ENORMOUSLY TO A GENUINELY LENINIST STYLE BEING ASSERTED IN THE LEADERSHIP OF THE PARTY AND THE COUNTRY-- A CONSIDERATE, RESPECTFUL ATTITUDE TO COLLEAGUES, BROAD EXCHANGES OF VIEWS, A COLLECTIVE SPIRIT IN WORKING OUT AND ADOPTING DECISIONS, A CALM AND OBJECTIVE APPROACH TO THE QUESTION AT HAND;"

-- WHILE "IT IS NOT THE CUSTOM IN THE SOVIET UNION TO TALK AT LENGTH ABOUT THE PERSONAL QUALITIES OF ONE OR ANOTHER LEADER," PEOPLE ARE IMPRESSED WITH BREZHNEV'S "TRULY INEXHAUSTIBLE ENERGY, GOOD CHEER AND OPTIMISM;" WESTERNERS WHO HAVE MET HIM HAVE LATER NOTED HIS COMPETENCE IN NEGOTIATIONS, EXCEPTIONAL COMPOSURE, DIRECTNESS AND SINCERITY, HIS MODESTY, HIS "FREE AND EASY MANNER;" PEOPLE NOTE HIS NATURAL SENSE OF HUMOR, EXPRESSIVE MIMICRY, THAT HE IS A "DEMOCRATIC PERSON, WITHOUT A TRACE OF CONCEIT;"

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-- "AT TIMES L.I. BREZHNEV BECOMES EMOTIONAL IN EXPRESSING HIS FEELINGS. HE IS AN ARDENT HOCKEY FAN. THE TEMPERAMENTAL NATURE OF THE GAME, ITS SWEEPING SPEED APPARENTLY APPEAL TO HIS CHARACTER. HE IS ALSO FOND OF FAST DRIVING, IN WHICH HE EXCELLS."

5. ON BREZHNEV'S FIELD OF COMPETENCY, THE BIOGRAPHY STATES IN PART:

-- WHEN WAR BROKE OUT HE IMMEDIATELY ASKED TO BE SENT TO THE FRONT, AND FROM THAT MOMENT UNTIL THE WAR ENDED "L.I. BREZHNEV WAS IN ACTIVE SERVICE IN THE ARMY;"

-- IN THE LATE 1950'S "L.I. BREZHNEV WAS ASSIGNED BY THE PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE TO DEAL WITH MATTERS RELATED TO THE

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF SOVIET HEAVY INDUSTRY AND CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION, TO EQUIPPING THE ARMED FORCES WITH MODERN WEAPONS AND TO CARRYING OUT THE SPACE RESEARCH PROGRAM;"

-- "IT WAS ON L.I. BREZHNEV'S INITIATIVE THAT HIS PARTY BEGAN DISCUSSING ECONOMIC POLICY IN THE PRESENT STAGE, WHEN THE COUNTRY HAD CREATED A TREMENDOUS POTENTIAL TO WORK OUT NEW APPROACHES TO THE SOLUTION OF VITAL TASKS;"

-- "THE CHAIRMAN OF THE DEFENSE COUNCIL OF THE USSR LEONID ILICH BREZHNEV CLEARLY REALIZED THE DESTRUCTIVE POWER OF THE MODERN ARMAMENTS STOCKPILES AROUND THE WORLD AND THE TERRIBLE MEANING OF THE DANGER OF A NEW WORLD WAR."

6. IN OTHER LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENTS:

-- DEMICHEV ENJOYED A BRIEF MOMENT OF GLORY WHEN HE DELIVERED A SPEECH TO THE SUPREME SOVIET SESSION ON PRESERVATION OF HISTORICAL MONUMENTS AND ARTIFACTS, EXCERPTS OF WHICH WERE SHOWN ON THE "VREMYA" NEWS PROGRAM THAT EVENING. DEMICHEV WORKED IN A LENGTHY TRIBUTE TO BREZHNEV'S BRONZE BUST AS WELL AS TO BREZHNEV PERSONALLY;

-- ACCORDING TO EASTERN EUROPEAN SOURCES, RYABOV HAS TAKEN OVER USTINOV'S CC SECRETARIAT PORTFOLIO FOR DEFENSE INDUSTRY; IN ANY EVENT, ON NOVEMBER 2 RYABOV ATTENDED A CONFIDENTIAL

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PLENUM OF THE SVERDLOVSK OBLAST OBKOM AT WHICH HE WAS REPLACED AS OBKOM FIRST SECRETARY BY OBKOM SECRETARY B. N. YEL'TSIN;

-- KULAKOV DEMONSTRATED STAMINA AND FORCEFUL DELIVERY DURING HIS "OCTOBER REVOLUTION" SPEECH AT THE KREMLIN NOVEMBER 5 (MOSCOW 17460); ALTHOUGH THE FACT THAT HE GAVE THE SPEECH EMPHASIZES HIS STATUS AS A MEMBER OF THE SENIOR LEADERSHIP, OUR RECORDS OF PAST SPEAKERS ON THIS PARTICULAR OCCASION INDICATE IT WAS MORE OR LESS "HIS TURN" TO DO THE HONORS; HE LAUDED BREZHNEV IN ALL THE RIGHT PLACES, AND TELEVISION COVERAGE OF THE EVENT INCLUDED CLOSE-UP SHOTS ONLY OF BREZHNEV AMONG THE SENIOR LEADERSHIP SEATED BEHIND KULAKOV (WHILE THE LATTER WAS SPEAKING).

7. ON BALANCE, APART FROM THE BUILD-UP FOR BREZHNEV'S BIRTHDAY, THE LEADERSHIP SITUATION SEEMS RELATIVELY STABLE FOR THE MOMENT. RUMORS OF LEADERSHIP CHANGES HAVE DIED DOWN, AND WE HAVE HEARD NOTHING FURTHER ABOUT THE EARLIER-RUMORED POSSIBILITY OF ANOTHER CC PLENUM BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR. MATLOCK

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, MAY DAY, HOLIDAYS, POLITICAL SITUATION, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 NOV 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MOSCOW17489
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760415-0088
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761173/aaaacslsg.tel
Line Count: 221
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 MOSCOW 17460, 76 MOSCOW 17449
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <13 APR 2004 by CollinP0>; APPROVED <04 AUG 2004 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOVIET LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENTS
TAGS: PINT, UR, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006